

BILL OF RIGHTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT APPLICANTS

The California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) endorses the following precepts that form the basis of a permit applicants "Bill of Rights":

1. Permit applicants have the right to assistance in understanding regulatory and permit requirements. All Cal/EPA programs maintain an Ombudsman to work directly with applicants. Permit Assistance Centers located throughout California have permit specialists from all the State, regional, and local agencies to identify permit requirements and assist in permit processing.
2. Permit applicants have the right to know the projected fees for review of applications, how any costs will be determined and billed, and procedures for resolving any disputes over fee billings.
3. Permit applicants have the right of access to complete and clearly written guidance documents that explain the regulatory requirements. Agencies must publish a list of all information required in a permit application and of criteria used to determine whether the submitted information is adequate.
4. Permit applicants have the right of timely completeness determinations for their applications. In general, agencies notify the applicant within 30 days of any deficiencies or determine that the application is complete. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and public hearing requests may require additional information.
5. Permit applicants have the right to know exactly how their applications are deficient and what further information is needed to make their applications complete. Pursuant to California Government Code Section 65944, after an application is accepted as complete, an agency may not request any new or additional information that was not specified in the original application.
6. Permit applicants have the right of a timely decision on their permit application. The agencies are required to establish time limits for permit reviews.
7. Permit applicants have the right to appeal permit review time limits by statute or administratively that have been violated without good cause. For state environmental agencies, appeals are made directly to the Cal/EPA Secretary or to a specific board. For local environmental agencies, appeals are generally made to the local governing board or, under certain circumstances, to Cal/EPA. Through this appeal, applicants may obtain a set date for a decision on their permit and in some cases a refund of all application fees (ask boards and departments for details).
8. Permit applicants have the right to work with a single lead agency where multiple environmental approvals are needed. For multiple permits, all agency actions can be consolidated under a lead agency. For site remediation, all applicable laws can be administered through a single lead agency.
9. Permit applicants have the right to know who will be reviewing their application and the time required to complete the full review process.